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AMERICA/BOLIVIA - "People have great human qualities, despite the conflicts and extreme poverty" testimony of the Auxiliary of the Apostolic Vicar of El Beni

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - The shortage of priests and the lack of economic self-sufficiency are the realities that characterize the Apostolic Vicariate of El Beni, in Bolivia. "I have been here for seven years, first as a pastor and then as Mgr. Julio Elias Montoya's Auxiliary " is what His Exc. Mgr. Roberto Bordi Catinari, OFM, Auxiliary Bishop of the Apostolic Vicar of El Beni tells Fides that met him in Rome.
"The first thing I have to observe with regards to this Vicariate - says Mgr. Bordi –is the people: very welcoming, have great human qualities, despite the conflicts and extreme poverty. The territory is big, 153,000 km2 with a population of 250,000 inhabitants, almost all Indigenous. It is a geographical area which is difficult for missions. First the Jesuit missions arrived. After their expulsion and the transition to the diocesan priests we Franciscans arrived. We have been here for nearly a century, but we are very few, only 20 priests, 8 diocesans and 12 Franciscans. This is why we are still an Apostolic Vicariate. There are also 60 women religious, but we have to offer them financial assistance."
Presenting the missionary work, Mgr. Bordi says: "A serious problem is given by poverty. The middle class earns little, and the popular class is even worse. The religious sects want to buy and take advantage of their need. Regardless, the Apostolic Vicariate is able to provide health service for many people. The Church runs schools, soup kitchens, nursery, nursing home for the elderly and even for farmers who are further away, in the rural area. Perhaps not everyone knows about the work in the missions: when it rains, everything is flooded, roads are cut off and remain closed for many days, so many villages remain isolated and have to move along the rivers. Despite all this, we also continue our work in these conditions with the communities." (CE) (Agenzia Fides 10/10/2012)

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